

FAQ – Drinking Water COVID-19 Financial Impacts Survey

These FAQs are advisory and subject to change by the State Water Resources Control Board in any future decision.

1. What is being collected and why?

The Board is collecting data on water system financial impacts and household water bill debt accumulation during the COVID-19 pandemic. The survey responses will allow the Board to formulate statewide estimates for water systems that may be facing financial crisis and the number of households with water bill debt, including the level and geographic distribution of debt. The survey questions and the reason for each question is listed below. The Board is collecting this data to inform policymakers of options for financial assistance and emergency response for water systems and households experiencing economic hardship.

2. How are delinquent accounts calculated?

The bill is delinquent if it's past due or late.

3. How is the data going to be used?

The Board will use the water system financial impacts information to:

- Develop estimates for how many systems may be at risk of financial failure in the next year
- Develop estimates of how much financial assistance would be needed to keep those systems operating
- Support planning and response work by emergency management agencies

The Board will use the household water bill debt information to:

- Develop a statewide estimate for water bill debt
- Identify zip codes with high levels of water bill debt
- Identify the number of households with different levels of water bill debt
- Identify the number of households receiving extended repayment assistance
- Analyze options for minimizing shut offs due to accumulated debt after the statewide moratorium on water shut offs is lifted

Policymakers at the state and federal levels may use the information to develop water system and water ratepayer assistance programs. The Board has received

letters from [Members of Congress](#) and the [Legislature](#) expressing support for the data collection effort.

4. How were the systems selected?

Two separate surveys have been created, one for community water systems (CWS) serving up to 10,000 connections and another for CWS serving more than 10,000 connections. A total of 500 CWS will be contacted to take the survey developed for the smaller CWS. Four categories, or ‘bins’, were defined based on the number of service connections served.

The water systems were randomly selected to meet the target number to be surveyed for each bin. The largest bin represents CWS serving up to 1,044 service connections; a total of 228 CWS were randomly selected from the 1,944 active CWS in this bin statewide. The table below summarizes the number of CWS selected from each bin. (The bin sizes were determined using statistical methods to ensure the results will be representative of the CWS statewide.) The list of the 500 selected systems is posted on the Board’s website

https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/drinking_water/certlic/drinkingwater/covid-19.html.

Bin (Service Connections)	Number of Active Community Water Systems (Statewide)	Number Selected for the Survey
A (1-1,044)	1,944	228
B (1,045 – 3,382)	265	133
C (3,383 – 6,457)	108	84
D (6,458 – 10,000)	72	65
Total	2,389	500

A total of 150 CWS will be contacted to take the survey developed for the larger CWS. The systems were selected at random from all active CWS statewide that serve greater than 10,000 service connections. The list of 150 selected systems is posted on the Board’s website

https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/water_issues/programs/conservation_portal/assistance/.

5. Will individual system data be made public?

When reporting on and displaying the survey data the Board will not refer to individual systems by name. However, the data is not confidential and is subject to disclosure via Public Records Act requests.

6. How is this different from the Board's prior survey and other surveys that have been conducted?

This survey aims to develop robust statewide estimates of water system financial impacts and household debt. The Board's prior survey addressed water system impacts but did not include questions relating to household debt. Other surveys, such as those issued by water industry associations and USEPA do not allow for the development of robust statewide estimates.

7. How will the survey be administered?

For water systems with less than 10,000 service connections:

- These systems will receive an email on November 9 with a scheduled date and time when they will receive a call from their Division of Drinking Water District Engineer. The District Engineer will fill out the survey based on answers provided on the phone call.

For water systems with greater than 10,000 service connections:

- These systems will receive an email on November 9 with the survey attached (Excel spreadsheet). Systems will be asked to return their completed surveys via email.
- Board staff will hold a workshop on November 18, 2020, from 1:00pm to 3:00pm to answer questions about the survey.

8. When will the data be made public?

The Board plans to publish the data in conjunction with a public report at the January 19, 2021 meeting. The schedule below contains the data collection, analysis, and reporting timeline. This timeline may change depending on whether the Board receives an adequate survey response.

9. Who do I contact if I have questions about the survey?

Please contact your local DDW District Office for inquiries about the water system financial impacts questions. The map and contact information for all DDW District Offices can be found here:

https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/drinking_water/programs/documents/ddwem/ddw_districtofficesmap.pdf

For inquiries regarding the household debt questions, please send an email to ORPP-WaterConservation@Waterboards.ca.gov.

(This fact sheet was last updated on January 5, 2021.)